



# Helping a volunteer team become sustainable

Volunteer Groups March  
2026



# Topics

1. Three Team De-Stabilisers
2. Five 'Healthy Team' Ideas
3. Questions for Discussion



# Three team destabilisers

If one or more of these are going wrong, your team is in trouble

1. Unhealthy team dynamics
2. Uncompromising leadership
3. Unhelpful ways of working

*He aha te mea nui?*

*Māku e kii atu, he tāngata, he tāngata, he tāngata*

"What is the most important thing in the world? It is people, it is people, it is people"



# Unhealthy Team Dynamics

## What can cause unhealthy dynamics?

- **Strong team personalities**
- **Disrespectful talk and behaviour**
- **Coasters**



# Uncompromising Leadership

## What is uncompromising?

- Too enthusiastic and eager
- Too controlling
- Too demanding & impatient



# Unhelpful Ways of Working

## What do we mean by unhelpful?

- Not willing to meet or participate
- Not a team player; prefers solo
- Unreliable, questionable commitment
- Not willing to follow agreed ways of working (processes, practises)



# Building a Healthy Team

Ideas to keep a team from  
degrading over time

1. Meetings
2. Leadership
3. Team membership
4. Achievement
5. Fun



# Healthy (sustainable) Team Idea #1

1

Regular  
team  
meetings



1. Regular meetings promote engagement, build momentum, rapport, comradeship, and ways of working
2. Allows new people to join 'something'

But...

Meetings have to be well run. Agendas, notes, involvement of each member, well facilitated. Otherwise people opt out.

# Healthy (sustainable) Team Idea #2

2

Distributed  
Leadership &  
Decision  
Making



1. Founders must share leadership by stepping back and asking for others to participate and lead areas
1. Decisions should mostly be shared by 'consensus'

A team does need one or more leaders, to stimulate, agitate, challenge but also be willing to go with the team even if its not their first preference.

# Healthy (sustainable) Team Idea #3

3

Diverse  
Coordinator  
Team  
Membership



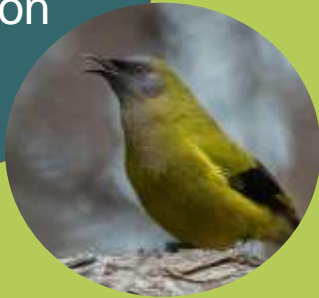
1. Teams tend to be better if there is a diversity of types - ages, genders, skill sets, etc.
2. The team needs to be big enough to provide diversity, but not too big to be un-weildly. (3-8)
3. Team members have to be good team players; willingly to contribute, collaborate, cooperate and compromise.

AND: There must be someone willing to confront problem people, behaviours and ask them to get on board or leave

# Healthy (sustainable) Team Idea #4

4

Achievement  
Direction  
Celebration



1. Team members need to feel like they are achieving something. Most people get bored just maintaining the status quo.
2. Teams therefore need direction, stretch goals and progress measures
3. We need to celebrate our progress, achievement and each other

The team needs to set these targets together.

# Healthy (sustainable) Team Idea #5

5

Finding Fun  
for Free

1. People are enthusiastic when they are getting to do what they enjoy
2. People have fun with people that energise them.

You need to regularly check in with people to see if they are doing what they feel good about.  
Good does not always equate to enjoyment.



# Questions & Discussion

What is your experience?

1. What things have helped your team be sustainable?
1. What things have you seen that impacted the health of the team?





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